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SPECULATIVE POSTHUMANISM: THE INHUMAN CORE OF SPECULATIVE NON-METAPHYSICS

PHILOFICTION APOCALYPSE, CONTINGENCY, HYPERREALITY, MACHINE, METAPHYSICS,
NICK LAND, SPECULATION

In ancient times religion was a form of binding, obligation, and bond between the divine and human. After the Enlightenment this binding was severed, and irreligion cut the bonds or knots that held the human to its objective sense of the divine returning us to our inhuman core and projects. The process of unbinding, subtraction, and detachment from the objective thought of the divine would start a process toward immanence, immortalization, and artificiality that is only

now becoming the truth of our inhuman future. Quentin Meillassoux in his essay "The Immanence of the World Beyond" offers three theses:

1. *Speculation is possible only insofar as it is non-metaphysical;*
2. *Irreligion is possible only by being speculative;*
3. *Immortality and the divine, are the possible outcomes of immanence – thinkable and livable – arising only from irreligion.*

"Nothing human will get out alive!" – Nick Land

Meillassoux offers a speculative philosophy that is non-metaphysical, based on the irreligious unbinding of the inhumanity of man from its metaphysical heritage. Through the 'principle of unreason' or *hyperchaos* as mad time he explores this speculative thought through a posthuman trajectory of immortalization and self-divinizing process of contingency and immanence. This would be an immortalization without gods or bonds, a possible speculative posthumanism of the artificial inhuman subtracted from the human. If as many philosophers have suggested humans have always been inhuman, then what is being subtracted by speculative philosophy is all the false layers of humanization that have accrued from the metaphysical justifications of religion and metaphysics. What becomes immortal is this inhuman thing we have always been. This returns us to the hermetic tradition of the divine as divination: the inhuman core emerging or being divined out of the non-metaphysical truth of this subtractive process of self-divinization—a process of becoming artificial gods. This immortalization project is a speculative process of self-divination in inhuman thought become real. The artificialization of our inhuman trajectory as machinic gods.

Stephen Overy in his Doctoral thesis goes to the heart of Nick Land's anti-philosophy of the Inhuman tells us:

In this era of accelerating technological change philosophy creates a false dichotomy between controlled change and uncontrolled change, whereas, for Land, the real dichotomy is between resisting change and accepting it. The impersonal forces of the outside irrupting at the moment: cryptocurrency, AI and singularity, demographic collapse, the death of the Westphalian state system, crises of capitalism, all are beyond the ability of humanity to steer. What remains is a binary choice to resist, or to progress. Resistance is always undertaken by the human subject in defense of what it knows, and is therefore fundamentally conservative, hence Land's critique of Ray Brassier's retreat into 'conceptual issues' as leading to philosophical conservatism.¹

For Land the whole post-Kantian tradition of philosophy and the sciences has bound itself within a metaphysical black box from which it cannot by conceptuality ever hope to extract or free itself. Only by opening itself to the pragmatic Outside of primary process and the productive forces that have shaped AI, modernity and Capitalism can it begin to break free of its chains to the humanistic worldview. Instead, we must end the chatter of theory and critique which always lead to regressions and circularities – 'aren't you using ideas to critique ideas' – that "short-circuit

metaphysical attempts to access base-material" (Overy, p. 302). As Overy suggests one way forward is to align Land's attempt at measuring desiring-production with an anti-metaphysical and mathematically precise determination of the rules that condition these underlying automatic productions of a materialist post-psychoanalytical method. (Overy, p. 303)

This is where Meillassoux's speculative posthumanism provides us with a possible way in or should we say a "way out": are we letting the Outside in, allowing the impersonal forces of artificiality and the inhuman to escape or subtract us from the human? Speculative philosophy provides us with a program. As Meillassoux describes it: "speculation is not only not necessarily metaphysical, but only the refusal of all metaphysics allows thought to arrive at authentically speculative truths. Put briefly, what has been called 'the end of metaphysics' is the very condition of an authentic access to the absolute." (445) Metaphysics is grounded in the "ontological argument" which would ultimately lead to the "Principle of Sufficient Reason" (PSR) which is closely associated with the philosophy of Leibniz.

Leibniz identified two kinds of truth, necessary and contingent truths. And he claimed that all truths are based upon two principles: (1) non-contradiction, and (2) sufficient reason. In the *Monadology*, he says,

Our reasonings are grounded upon two great principles, that of contradiction, in virtue of which we judge false that which involves a contradiction, and true that which is opposed or contradictory to the false; And that of sufficient reason, in virtue of which we hold that there can be no fact real or existing, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason, why it should be so and not otherwise, although these reasons usually cannot be known by us (paragraphs 31 and 32).

Meillassoux in contradistinction to such a metaphysical basis of truth provides an alternative to metaphysics:

The definition of non-metaphysical speculation is a mirror-image of this definition of metaphysics: an absolute non-metaphysics is an absolute grounded upon the effective falsehood of the principle of sufficient reason. In other words, the project of non-metaphysical speculation would be established thus: our inability to prove why there is something rather than nothing – this impossibility is not the mark of our ignorance of the true reasons for things, but an indication of our ability to come to know that there are, effectively, no reasons for anything. (446)

The above implies Meillassoux's notion of a radical contingency as the "truth of all things" (446). Contingency is based on the 'principle of unreason' or the irrationality of all things: the eternal property of things themselves consists in the fact that they can without reason become other than they are. (446) So that any speculative non-metaphysics is based on the radical theses that 'the principle of unreason' the absolute as hyper-chaos or "mad time" is without reason and capable of the emergence and abolition of the world, of destroying the laws of physics and bringing others into being. (446) For Meillassoux this brings only one conclusion that we live at the eye of a storm—a storm he terms *Surchaos*: "eternal chaos, nestled in the heart of the

manifest irrationality of all things.” (446)

I'm not going to explicate the intricacies of his formal argument which is at the core of his essay. Only to add the image of the *Viator* – the Traveler: “What will we do when we will have become forever what the Middle Ages called a traveler – a *viator* – a man of the earth and not the blessed in heaven, a *viator* forever condemned to his living condition, a kind of prosaic immortal without any transcendence or struggle to give meaning to the undefined pursuit of his being?” (473) Meillassoux answers this question with the simplicity of a strange prophet, telling us that what will happen for this prosaic immortal is simply that he will live the *communist life*, a *life finally without politics* (473). A life beyond war, violence, and sacrifice –the life of an immortal being outside the human. He terms this being the “eschatological subject” who seeks the ‘fourth world’ which is “founded in this instance upon the universal law, in its post-nihilist constitution”. (474)

Obviously, for Meillassoux there is a transitional phase, a long road ahead to this ‘politics of finality’ –a politics of emancipation from the human by the inhuman we are, a militant politics of despair and nihilism which provides for the time being an immanence which is a “deceptive immortality”. (477) The “God which does not exist” is for Meillassoux the Hermetic project of the “deification of humanity,” a “trajectory which in the present world enables the vectoral subject to overcome the double experience of dilemma and of nihilism in order to turn himself into a ‘bridge’ between the third and fourth world.” (448) This bridge being, this deification or subtraction from the human by the inhuman trajectory of becoming ‘*other-than-we-are*’ is the process of turning ourselves into a “demon: a *metaxu*, an intermediary, a living passage between thinking of this world and the justice of the ultimate world”. (478)

The late Mark Fisher once suggested: “While 20th-century experimental culture was seized by a recombinatorial delirium, which made it feel as if newness was infinitely available, the 21st century is oppressed by a crushing sense of finitude and exhaustion.”² The sense that the future is over, that we’ve seen the best humanity has to offer, that technological and social progress has been stifled by the end game of capitalist civilization and its command and control over planetary culture and economics. With all the signs of impending doom being fed to us from notions of ongoing economic collapse, climate change, social unrest, political mayhem, etc., we are being aligned to a world of fear and terror that is total and absolute. This apocalyptic culture seems to pervade our lives contaminating our minds and hearts with its insipid message of fatalism. A culture of conspiracy and duplicity, disinformation and hyperrealism invade our lives to the point that the old regimes of truth both religious and secular have failed us. We no longer have access to an objective source of truth and value to judge what is false from real, the last stage of Nietzsche’s forecast for modernity is at hand: the total collapse of humanity into the Last Man – a completed nihilism that ends in either a renewal or an apocalypse.

Like many in our time Nick Land envisions a migration of intelligence from organic to anorganic posthuman machinic civilization:

The high road to thinking no longer passes through a deepening of human cognition, but

rather through a becoming inhuman of cognition, a migration of cognition out into the emerging planetary technosentience reservoir, into 'dehumanized landscapes ... emptied spaces'! where human culture will be dissolved. Just as the capitalist urbanization of labour abstracted it in a parallel escalation with technical machines, so will intelligence be transplanted into the purring data zones of new software worlds in order to be abstracted from an increasingly obsolescent anthropoid particularity, and thus to venture beyond modernity.³

This movement of intelligence from homo sapiens to “techno sapiens” (p. 294) is once again a part of Land's need to escape the flesh, to become immortal, to seek salvation and redemption not through theological measures of belief, but rather through the transhuman potential of science and a vitalistic libidinal materialism: “Domination is merely the phenomenological portrait of circuit inefficiency, control malfunction, or stupidity. The masters do not need intelligence, Nietzsche argues, therefore they do not have it. It is only the confused humanist orientation of modernist cybernetics which lines up control with domination. Emergent control is not the execution of a plan or policy, but the unmanageable exploration that escapes all authority and obsolesces law. According to its futural definition control is guidance into the unknown, exit from the box.” (FN, p. 301) This “exit from the box” is of course the human body itself.

This whole process of transcendence in immanence becomes the metaphysical program of a new cybernetics freed of the command and control of humanistic goals: “The circuits get hotter and denser as economics, scientific methodology, neo-evolutionary theory, and AI come together: terrestrial matter programming its own intelligence at impact upon the body without organs = o. Futural infiltration is subtilizing itself as capital opens onto schizo-technics, with time accelerating into the cybernetic backwash from its flip-over, a racing non-linear countdown to planetary switch.” (FN, p. 317).

“Along one axis of its emergence, virtual materialism names an ultra-hard antiformalist AI program, engaging with biological intelligence as sub-programs of an abstract post-carbon machinic matrix, whilst exceeding any deliberated research project. Far from exhibiting itself to human academic endeavour as a scientific object, AI is a meta-scientific control system and an invader, with all the insidiousness of planetary technocapital flipping over. Rather than its visiting us in some software engineering laboratory, we are being drawn out to it, where it is already lurking, in the future.” (p. 326).

This sense that the future has already happened and is not part of some linear historical narrative of Progressive modernity, but rather an acceleration of processes from the Outside in — the emergence of futural time in our own, this sense of Meillassoux's hyperChaos of a mad time when anything is possible. Time's spirals. T.S. Eliot in 'Little Gidding,' “What we call the beginning is often the end/And to make an end is to make a beginning.” Time is relative. (Einstein) We seem to be out of time... An apocalypse (Ancient Greek: ἀποκάλυψις apokálypsis, from ἀπό and καλύπτω, literally meaning “an uncovering”) is a disclosure or revelation of knowledge or divinity. Hermetic self-divinizing processes or the vectors of an inhuman trajectory out of the human altogether, a subtraction from the metaphysical to the non-metaphysical 'eschaology' rather than eschatology in which chaotic processes emerge to define the new artificial gods we are

becoming.

1. Overy, Stephen. The genealogy of Nick Land's anti-anthropocentric philosophy: a psychoanalytic conception of machinic desire. <https://theses.ncl.ac.uk/dspace/bitstream/10443/3350/1/Overy%2c%20S.%202016.pdf> (Page 298). Bio: <https://www.ncl.ac.uk/philosophy/staff/profile/stephenovery1.html#research>
2. Fisher, Mark. Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures (Kindle Locations 190-191). John Hunt Publishing. Kindle Edition.
3. Land, Nick. Fanged Noumena: : Collected Writings 1987–2007. Urbanomic / Sequence Press; 4th edition (October 23, 2018)
4. taken from here: Speculative Posthumanism: The Inhuman Core of Speculative Non-Metaphysics | Dr. Rinaldi's Horror Cabinet (wordpress.com)

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